The Role of the Shudras of the Lower Strata in the Extension of Agriculture on the Kannada Coast - A Historical Perspective

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Summary:

This research paper discusses the Shudra groups, described as the lower strata of society like the Mogers, the Billavars, Kumbaras, Koragas, Bakudas, Malekudiyas, Halepaikas etc., who brought more land under cultivation in Dakshina and Uttara Kannada Districts by clearing forests and levelling ground. The study is based on the inscriptions, Travelers accounts, and folk literature like the Tulu Paddanas, folk stories and archival material.

Many of these groups had been craftsmen, but were also engaged in agriculture. Groups like the Holeyas and Bakudas, who toiled as bonded laborers of agricultural slaves (called as Holeyalu, Mannalu or Huttalu) were sold with the land and toiled for the extension of most of the agricultural lands under a master. Other communities like the Kumbaras, Billavas and the Halepaikas owned these lands or tilled them as tenants. The author outlines this process from the days of Vijayanagara till the dawn of the modern age.